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North Carolina A&T State University
School of Agriculture and
Environmental Sciences
Newsletter
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Small Farms Week responds to growing national interest in small-scale agriculture

It's 6 p.m. Do you know where the food on your dinner plate is from? That's a question that could figure prominently in the economic survival of small farmers during an unsteady economy.

Gearing up for its 24th observance of Small Farms Week in North Carolina, The Cooperative Extension Program organizers advise farmers to continue calling on Extension expertise. With the economy still at an uneven pitch, small farms — those that generate \$250,000 or less annually in gross income — are as affected by financial fallout as many other businesses and industries.

Yet, farming on the small scale is more popular than ever as consumers seek more locally-grown food.

on a national level. Nevertheless, many small growers report that even in the midst of the warnings, there is still a demand for their locally grown fruits and vegetables by consumers who know and trust them. McKinnie says farmers must continue a relationship with Cooperative Extension to keep that consumer confidence, and to know and gauge the marketplace.

"We have to work with these farmers and position them to capitalize on understanding what to grow, how the consumer wants it, whether they want it as a whole product or value-added, and to understand the marketing," McKinnie says. "These are skill sets that small farmers who are interested will have to gear themselves up to achieving or maintaining."

The theme of this year's observance, Small Farms: It's a Growing Business "Planting the Seeds of Success," speaks to that same spirit of cultivation embraced by McKinnie; one that is also represented in programming for this year's event. Educational forums scheduled March 23 and 24 on campus are focused on adding value to crops.

Experts from the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, including Cooperative Extension, will show and discuss: how to seed, transplant and graft in greenhouses and high-tunnel structures, which can jumpstart and extend the traditional growing season for

farmers. Experts will also discuss the benefits of locally produced crops, how to market the nutritional value of crops with tips on recipes, and how to safely handle, prepare and store those crops.

"We've known that small farmers have always had a tough situation relative to financing their operation," McKinnie says. "We're working with farmers weathering tough economic times; giving farmers the skills and knowledge that they can put to use to improve their economic situations."



John L. Council has a 68-acre farm in Hoke County with a diversified production mix. Council's spread was honored as the 2009 Small Farm of the Year by The Cooperative Extension Program at A&T.

"Peoples' interest is in where their food comes from, where it has traveled and whether it's secure," says Dr. M. Ray McKinnie, administrator of Cooperative Extension and associate dean of the SAES. "Small farmers are uniquely positioned to capitalize on the vast interests of the consumer wanting to buy locally-grown fresh fruits and vegetables."

With every food recall, whether it's tomatoes contaminated with salmonella or spinach contaminated with E. coli, shoppers recoil in uncertainty

Past recipients of the Small Farmer of the Year Award

2009	John L. Council Farms, Hoke County
2008	Mary and Nelson James, Pender County
2007	Gary Morrell, Alexander County
2006	Ann and Harold Wright, Bladen County
2005	Kirby and Nathaniel Maram, Watauga County
2004	Stanley Hughes, Orange County
2003	Amy Locklear-Cummings and Ellery Locklear, Robeson County
2002	James A. Davis III, Halifax County
2001	Burnice Blanks, Robeson County
2000	Willie Woolard, Martin County
1999	James Dunn, Wake County
1998	Barbara and Lesker Loyied Norris, Wake County
1997	Barbara and Larry Pierce, Halifax County
1996	Jackie Garner, Bladen County
1995	Betsy and Alex Hitt, Alamance County
1994	Harold Davis, Yancey County
1993	Elton Smith, Halifax County
1992	Charles D. Sneed, Franklin County
1991	Linda Woody, Yancey County
1990	Robert Edmonds Jr., Halifax County
1989	Lonnie Harrison Jr., Warren County
1988	Kenneth Tobler, Surry County
1987	Roy Robertson, Stokes County

Small Farms Week Schedule of Events *March 21 – 27*

Monday, March 22

10 a.m. — Kickoff

RAEFORD CIVIC CENTER
(200 S. College Drive, Raeford)

Keith Walters, Hoke County Extension director, will be presiding. **Clinton McRae**, director for Cooperative Extension's South Central District, and **Tony Hunt**, Chair of the Hoke County Board of Commissioners, will bring greetings. **Ireni Autry**, who chairs Hoke County Extension's Advisory Council, and **Ernestine Alston**, the chair for The Cooperative Extension Program at A&T's Strategic Planning Council, will issue the official welcome.

The 2009 Small Farmer of the Year Video

Dr. M. Ray McKinnie, associate dean and administrator for The Cooperative Extension Program at A&T, will introduce the video, which features John Council of Hoke County, the winner of the 2009 Small Farmer of the Year Award.

10:45 a.m. — Panel Discussion: *Planting the Seeds of Success*

Moderator: **Nelson Brownlee**, Extension area farm management agent, Robeson and Bladen counties

Panelists:

- **Jackie Rogers**, part of the team that helped Council Farms of Hoke County win the 2009 Small Farmer of the Year Award for innovations in marketing and distribution as well as a varied production mix.
- **Dr. John O'Sullivan**, Extension farm management and marketing specialist, A&T. O'Sullivan also serves as Sustainable Agriculture coordinator at A&T, and is the University's representative to the Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture (SARE) professional development program.
- **Melissa Tomas**, president of the Don Steed Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization. Teachers and volunteers at Don Steed have worked with Cooperative Extension to establish an award-winning school garden, which supplements classroom curricula in science, math and nutrition.

Noon — *Lunch on site*

Luncheon speaker: Raz Autry

Autry, the author of six books, is also retired from a 36-year career in education that included 20 years as a high school principal and 10 years as the superintendent of Hoke County Schools. The background credential that Autry will probably turn to most frequently in his kickoff address, however, is the peach and produce farm, G.R. Autry and Son, that he has operated since 1983.

1:30 to 3 p.m. — *Tour of John L.*

Council Farms

(1920 Haire Road, Shannon)

The 68-acre Hoke County farm's production mix includes managed forestland, pasture-raised hogs, and poultry, and several acres of organic vegetables. The John L. Council Farms commitment to environmentally sensitive production technologies ranges from a drip irrigation system to solar panels that generate the current for electric fencing.

Tuesday, March 23

1 to 4 p.m. — *Vegetable production*

The Small Farms Week programs for vegetable growers will convene at the University Farm at 1:30 p.m. Following greetings, participants divide up into four groups and the groups will rotate through on-site production technology demonstrations, comprising 40-minute programs led by Extension specialists and associates.

The topics and featured speakers are:

- **Seeding and transplant management in greenhouses**
— **Grace Summers**, Extension associate, A&T
- **Grafting tomatoes on disease resistant rootstock**
— **Rickie Holness**, Extension associate, A&T
- **Winter vegetable production in high tunnel greenhouses**
— **Dr. Keith Baldwin**, Extension horticulture specialist, A&T
- **Early spring growing season extension, cultural management, outdoor row covers**
— **Dr. Chris Gunter**, Extension horticulture specialist, N.C. State University

Wednesday, March 24

Small Farmers' Appreciation Day at N.C. A&T

8:30 – 10:30 a.m. — *Educational Forum:*

Five programs providing tips and tools for farmers to use in marketing nutrition, health and wellness, as they add value to their produce by marketing directly to consumers.
STALLINGS BALLROOM
(Memorial Student Union Building, A&T campus)

- **Session I (8:30 – 8:50 a.m.) Economic benefits — for consumers and producers — of locally grown crops**
— **Dr. John O'Sullivan**
- **Session II (8:50 – 9:15 a.m.) Marketing the nutritional advantages of locally grown crops**
— **Dr. Patricia Lynch**, Assistant Professor for food and nutrition, Department of Family & Consumer Sciences, A&T
- **Session III (9:15 – 9:40 a.m.) Recipe recommendations for adding "meal appeal" to locally grown crops**
— **Dr. Montreka Dansby**, Extension nutrition specialist, A&T
- **Session IV: (9:40 – 10 a.m.) Some overlooked health benefits of locally grown produce and farm commodities**
— **Dr. Patricia Lynch**
- **Session V: (10 – 10:20 a.m.) Attending to food safety when locally grown farm commodities are marketed directly to consumers.**
— **Dr. Leonard Williams**, lead scientist for food safety research at A&T's Center for Excellence in Post-Harvest Technologies at the N.C. Research Campus.

11 a.m. — *Premiere of Solutions for North Carolina® and sponsor VIP reception*

(By invitation only)

ALUMNI FOUNDATION EVENTS CENTER
(Bluford Street and Benbow Road on the A&T campus)

Presiding: **Dr. Celvia Stovall**, associate administrator, The Cooperative Extension Program at A&T

For the first public showing of the annual multimedia report on the impacts of The Cooperative Extension Program at A&T

Noon — *Small Farmers' Appreciation*

Luncheon

ALUMNI FOUNDATION EVENTS CENTER
(Bluford Street and Benbow Road on the A&T campus)

Dr. M. Ray McKinnie will be presiding; Steve Troxler, North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture and Dr. Donald McDowell, interim dean of the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at A&T, will have a few remarks before the featured speaker is introduced.

Speaker: **Pearlie Reed**, USDA's Assistant Secretary for Administration

Now USDA's top management official, Pearlie Reed's 33-year USDA career includes four years as the first African American chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. In his present role as assistant secretary for administration, Reed plays a prominent role in USDA's Office of Civil Rights and its work to ensure equitable access to all USDA programs. He began his USDA career with the NRCS's successor agency, the Soil Conservation Service, in 1970 after graduating from the University of Arkansas. He has served as State Conservationist for both Maryland and California, and in 1993 he received a USDA Honor Award for civil rights and equal opportunity leadership.

2:30 p.m. — *Dedication Ceremony for the L.C. Cooper Jr. Center* ROOM A-16 C.H. MOORE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH STATION

Student Research Poster Competition Winners

ALUMNI FOUNDATION EVENTS CENTER

The Agricultural Research Program and the A&T chapter of Gamma Sigma Delta, the honor society for agriculture, have a research poster contest for SAES students in conjunction with Small Farms Week each year. The three top entries in both the graduate and undergraduate competitions will be on display at the Alumni Foundation Events Center during the Small Farmers' Appreciation Day luncheon.



Leonard C. Cooper Sr. (with plaque) was presented the Alumni Excellence Award at A&T's Spring Commencement in May of 2009. Pictured with Cooper (from left): former national president of the A&T Alumni Association, Pamela Johnson; former chair of the A&T Board of Trustees, Dr. Velma Speight-Buford; and A&T's alumni director, Leonora Bryant.

SAES to pay tribute to Cooper family's generosity during Small Farms Week 2010

Leonard C. Cooper of Warrenton, a loyal Aggie alumnus, and his wife Margaret have presented the SAES with a \$100,000 endowment in memory of their son, Leonard C. Cooper Jr., '73. The gift will support the Department of Agribusiness, Applied Economics and Agriscience Education, as well as the International Trade Center, which will be renamed in honor of the younger Cooper, who died in an automobile accident in 1982.

"We are extremely grateful to the Coopers for this generous endowment," said Dr. Donald McDowell, interim dean of the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences. "We are also honored by the trust the Coopers have shown in the SAES to use this endowment to contribute to the legacy of their son."

The elder Cooper, 88, has had a long and varied career that began at A&T, where he received a bachelor's in horticulture in 1943. After graduation, he enlisted in the military and became a flight engineer. He later worked for the N.C. Department of Agriculture, assisting veterans with their farm enterprises, and subsequently for the Cooperative Extension Service in Warren County as a county agent and Extension director. Cooper has served as president of the North Carolina chapter of the Black Farmer and Agriculturalists Association, and was himself a farmer, cultivating 800 acres of peanuts and soybeans. An avid supporter of A&T, Cooper is a charter member of the A&T Alumni Society, and is the 2009 recipient of the Alumni Excellence Award.

Small Farms Week

~ it's a growing business ~

To register for any Small Farms Week activities, visit the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences Web page, www.ag.ncat.edu. A \$20 registration fee is required for Tuesday and Wednesday's activities. Small Farmers who register in advance are exempt. The registration deadline is March 12.

A&T's interim provost, **Dr. Alton Thompson**, will be honored on March 19 in Charlotte when the Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists, Inc. presents him the organization's 2010 W.E.B. DuBois Award. The award "honors outstanding Black Americans who, in the tradition of W.E.B. DuBois, have made significant contributions to the greater knowledge, understanding, and welfare of Blacks in America." While a member of the SAES faculty, Thompson's demographic and rural sociology research resulted in 25 articles in refereed journals, seven book chapters and a book. While an SAES administrator, he chaired the 1890 Association of Research Directors and the 1890 Council of Deans of Agriculture. He was also inducted into the Cooperative States Research, Education, and Extension Service Hall of Fame.

In February 2010, **Dr. Donald McDowell**, interim SAES dean, finishes up a one-year term as chair-elect and makes the transition to a one-year term as chair of the Southern Region of the Academic Program Section (APS) of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU). The APS promotes teaching excellence internally among its 120 participant institutions while concurrently working with lobbying representatives to ensure federal funding for academic programming. As the unit within the APLU composed of administrators of academic programs, the APS also weighs in on issues of interest to the entire APLU membership, now 219 members enrolling more than 4.7 million students and awarding nearly a million degrees annually.

Dr. M. Ray McKinnie, administrator and associate dean for The Cooperative Extension Program at A&T, has assumed responsibilities as chair of the 15-member Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) and its executive committee. ECOP is an elected committee that functions as a board of directors and represents 57 state and territorial Cooperative Extension systems in public policy arenas. ECOP works through the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (known as the National Association of State Universities and Land-grant Colleges when ECOP was established in the 1950s) and USDA agencies to identify the national concerns that should filter down to local and state programming and budget priorities for Cooperative Extension.

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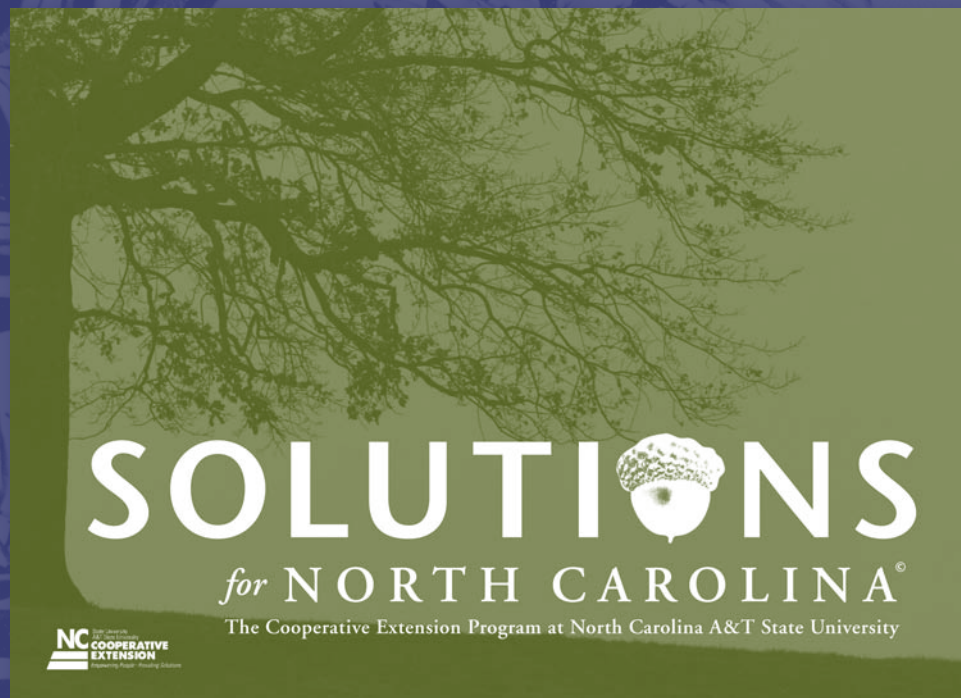
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